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Viewing cable 06BERN1553, FM CALMY-REY LASHES OUT AT THE UNITED STATES, EU \

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06BERN1553	2006-08-23 08:46	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Bern

Appears in these articles:

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DE RUEHSW #1553/01 2350846

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

O 230846Z AUG 06

FM AMEMBASSY BERN

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2884

INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2583

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0092

75837 2006-08-23 08:46:00 06BERN1553 Embassy Bern CONFIDENTIAL VZCZCXRO8379\

OO RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR\

DE RUEHSW #1553/01 2350846\

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FM AMEMBASSY BERN\

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2884\

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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2583\

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0092 C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERN 001553 \

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STATE FOR P, G, EUR, EUR/AGS \

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/22/2016 \

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SUBJECT: FM CALMY-REY LASHES OUT AT THE UNITED STATES, EU \
AND UN; PUSHES ENVELOPE ON SWISS "ACTIVE NEUTRALITY" \

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Carol Urban, Reasons 1.4 b/d \

1.(SBU) Summary: Addressing an August 21 conclave of Swiss \
ambassadors in Bern, Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey \
touted her vision of Swiss "active neutrality" and action on \
international humanitarian law, peacekeeping, and good \
offices as a means to maximizing Swiss influence. Bemoaning \
the lack of international consensus on various world hot \
spots Calmy-Rey slammed the United States as unilateral, \
simplistic, and offensive in its pursuit of national \
interests. She also described the Europe Union as too weak \
and divided to play its proper "balancing role," and the \
United Nations as too powerless to resolve crises in Iraq, \
Sudan, and Lebanon. Calmy-Rey proposed that Switzerland seek \
a seat on the UN Security Council to expand its influence. \
While media reaction to the speech was muted, critics on the \
center-right rejected as contrary to the Swiss neutrality \
principle the proposed enlargement of the Swiss military role \
in peacekeeping. Some Swiss MPs objected to Calmy-Rey's \
criticism of Europe as counterproductive to good relations \
and promised follow up. Last month, Calmy-Rey's cabinet \
colleagues agreed to adopt a low profile on the current \
conflict in the Middle East after the FM criticized Israel's \
"disproportionate" response. End summary. \

Seeking Influence through International Law, Peacekeeping \

2.(SBU) Opening the traditional annual conference of Swiss \
ambassadors in Bern, August 21, Foreign Minister Calmy-Rey \
called for a stronger international political role for \
Switzerland. The theme of this year's three-day gathering of \
high-level Swiss diplomats was "power and influence - the \
opportunities and limits of a strategy of influence." \
Undeterred by the total lack of support from cabinet \
colleagues and heavy criticism from MPs over her public \
criticism of Israel during the Lebanon crisis, Calmy-Rey \
defended her version of "active neutrality." In her view, \
neutrality must not impede Switzerland from actively \
defending its own interests abroad. Switzerland, she argued, \
would only lose credibility were it to remain silent in the \
face of violations of international law, be they in the \
Middle East, Sri Lanka, or Sudan. Recognizing that \
Switzerland lacked clout to resolve crises on its own, \
Calmy-Rey argued for a foreign policy based on the promotion \
of international law and participation in UN peacekeeping \
efforts. She supported the idea of Switzerland competing for \
a UN Security Council seat, since Switzerland's "voice is not \
properly heard during the resolution of international crises." \

United States too powerful; EU and UN too weak \

3.(SBU) Calmy-Rey sharply criticized the United States, and \
bemoaned the ineffectiveness of the European Union, and \
United Nations. "The world is dominated by a single \
superpower," she said, and there is nothing new in the United \
States pursuing its interests in a clear and aggressive \
manner. "What is new is the unilateral approach and the \
simplicity of the arguments." In Calmy-Rey's view, the whole \
world is waiting for Europe to assume the role "that is \
expected" as a balancing force in world politics. Instead, \
Europe is divided, as seen before the Iraq war, and it risks \
being caught in a vise between the United States and China. \
The international community, too, has a long way to go before \
becoming a community of states governed by laws, with Iraq, \
Lebanon, and Sudan exhibiting the "powerlessness" of the UN. \

Mixed Domestic Reaction \

4.(U) Among major political parties, Calmy-Rey's speech \
prompted predictable reactions, although there was some \
surprising criticism from her own party. The right-populist \

Swiss Peoples Party (SVP) strenuously objected to Calmy-Rey's \
"aimless activism" and her attempt "to toss out neutrality," \
and vowed to follow up in Parliament. The centrist Free \
Democrats (FDP) and Christian Democrats (CD) agreed with a \
more active foreign policy, but were skeptical of a Security \
Council bid and thought counterproductive her criticism of \
the EU. Calmy-Rey's own Socialists were divided between \
those favoring a UNSC bid as a logical next step and those \
who view such lofty aims as ridiculous. \

5.(U) All major Swiss newspapers ran articles covering the \
speech. Given the controversial nature of her remarks, \
coverage was rather low key. Surprisingly, French language \
papers in Calmy-Rey's home district of Geneva were neutral \

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rather than supportive of her comments. The majority of \
German media reported on the speech in a balanced-to-critical \
manner. Leftist papers such as the Tages Anzeiger -- a daily \
that is typically anti-American -- praised her as visionary \
and highlighted the contrast between this year's speech and \
last year's, when Calmy-Rey underscored the need to \
"strengthen ties with strategic partners USA and China." \
According to the paper, with the prospect of a U.S.-Swiss \
free trade agreement off the table, Calmy-Rey was happy to \
give the superpower USA the cold shoulder. \

Comment \

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6.(C) It has been post's frequent assessment that Calmy-Rey \
has never ceased being a political activist, even while \
serving on the Swiss Federal Council (Cabinet) as Foreign \
Minister. Certainly, her penchant for "speaking truth to \
power," that is, speaking out against the United States, has \
burnished her domestic credentials as an independent voice of \
the people. She regularly receives some of the highest \
ratings among Swiss political figures in popularity polls. \
That said, she is not particularly beloved by her cabinet \
colleagues, or even her own Department of Foreign Affairs \
staff. We anticipate that the speech will offer an \
opportunity for her opponents to again criticize her as too \
extreme and isolated. However, her bold talk will likely \
further endear her to her party and the broader Swiss public. \

End comment. \

URBAN \